

Stranger and stranger by Grimm fan

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Summary: Will Byers has returned from the upside down and the boys are trying to get their lives back to normal. Will can't tell his friends that it will never be normal again.

1. Chapter 1

"I know I know. She flipped the car with her mind. I get it. It was totally cool." Will Byers had heard the stories about Eleven so many times he sometimes forgot that he had never met her, so vivid were the memories his friends shared with him.

"I know you weren't there Will but it was so cool." Mike said. He talked of Eleven more than the rest of the boys. Everyone knew that he liked her. Even Mike knew that he liked her, but until Mike admitted it out loud it was understood that no one was to speak of it. "Does it bother you that we talk about her too much?"

"No." Will lied. He didn't hate the talk of Eleven, but he had never met her either so he didn't share the others enthusiasm for talking about her. He admitted to himself that he was a little jealous of Eleven. He thought when he came back everything would be about him and it felt like she was stealing his thunder. He was the kid who was never special and just when he thought he could be special along came someone who was so remarkable that poor ordinary Will was just Will again.

"My favourite still has to be when she made Troy piss his pants in front of the whole school." Dustin said. His front teeth were just starting to come in but he still had a lisp. It was worse when he was smiling as he was now and it made him hard to understand if you weren't around him all the time and used to how it sounded.

"I would have liked to have seen that." Will admitted. None of the boys hated Troy more than Will and to have seen him humiliated like that would have been fantastic. "I would have thought your favourite was watching her break Troy's arm so he wouldn't cut your face open"

"That was pretty cool too. You can bet Troy won't bother us much anymore." Dustin replied. "Yep. Eleven was pretty special."

Will could admit to himself that Eleven was pretty special, but he was special too, just in a way that scared him. He still had not told the others that he could still see the upside down sometimes. Will had no

idea when or why he was able to see the upside down, it would be so brief sometimes that he was not sure himself if he had seen it. Other times it was for a minute or two and there was no denying its presence. Luckily he had always been alone when it happened so he never had to explain why he was so scared, it never got easier. Every time he saw the upside down all of the memories of his time trapped there came rushing back. It was the most horrible experience of his life, and he was being forced to relive it time and again. He wanted to tell his friends about it but did not know how to start. Deep down inside he was afraid that maybe he was crazy and if everyone found out they would send him away.

Will was lost in thought and did not hear Lucas sneaking up behind him. The other boys saw what Lucas was doing and tried their best not to let it show on their faces, it didn't matter because Will wasn't paying attention anyway.

"Aaahhhh!" Lucas yelled as he jumped up behind Will and grabbed his shoulders. Will instantly found himself in the upside down again. It was a rotting, stinking copy of Mike's basement. It was cold and lifeless like it always was but something felt different. "What the hell!?" Lucas yelled. Will realized that Lucas was still holding onto his shoulders and was there with him in the upside down.

As suddenly as it had appeared the upside down was gone and Will and Lucas were back in Mike's basement. "What the HELL was that!?" Lucas screamed.

"You disappeared!" Dustin yelled. "You disappeared! You disappeared!"

"How did you do that!?" Mike yelled.

"What the hell was that!?" Lucas yelled.

Everyone was yelling. Hands on heads and running around in chaos. The only person not freaking out was Will, sitting in his seat, shoulders hunched, and head down.

Finally Mike got control of himself and noticed Will different that all the rest. "Will do you know what just happened? Do you know what

is going on? How did you go invisible? And how did you make it happen to Lucas too?"

Will kept staring at the ground. Quietly, as though if he said it too loud it would happen again, he explained. "That was the upside down."

"I didn't see anything!" Dustin was still way too excited to speak calmly "I just saw you sitting there one second, then Lucas scared you, and then both of you were gone, just gone."

"Oh I saw something all right!" Lucas yelled back. He was much more agitated than the others and was shaking so much his voice quivered. "I saw you basement Mike but it was dark and rotten and stinking and felt like death and the air was thick and oily and it all felt wrong."

"That is the upside down. It is like here... but not." Will said and then was quiet.

"So has this happened to you before?" Mike asked.

"A lot. Sometimes everyday some times it will be a week before it happens again. I can't control when it happens or for how long. It just happens."

Everyone say still. Stunned. Finally Will said "You saw it too Lucas? So that means it's not all in my head."

"I wish it was all in your head and that you would keep it there. I had no idea the upside down was like that. How did you stand being there for so long Will. It would have killed me for sure." Lucas said.

"I am just happy that I am not crazy." Will was relieved that he could talk to his friends about the upside down.

"But wait." Dustin was starting to get control of himself better. "We were all here when it happened. Why didn't we all see it?"

Mike's head shot up like he just realized something important. "Lucas was touching Will. The rest of us were here but only Lucas was touching him."

"In that case I am never touching you again Will. No offence." Lucas said.

"I don't blame you Lucas. I hate seeing the upside down. It scares me."

"I don't think you just SAW the upside down. I think you were actually there. Or else why did you disappear? Will you must somehow have brought back the ability to travel between this world and the upside down when you came back." Mike said.

"Like a gateway. But a gateway that isn't a place but a person." Dustin said. He always seemed to get the grasp of things quickly. "You remember how the creature was able to open a gateway in a wall or ceiling. Well maybe Will can open one with his mind. Wow Will that is cool!"

"Cool?! How is that cool? I can travel randomly to another dimension that only has one inhabitant that has a whole head of jaws and it wants to eat you. And even if it doesn't find you the whole place is dying and the air is killing you. And you think that is cool?!"

"We can't choose our powers Will. We just choose how to use them." Dustin sounded philosophical.

"But that is the point Dustin. I don't know how to use my powers. I don't even think they are powers. More like a curse."

"But if you could learn how to control it. Then maybe at least you could keep it from happening when you aren't expecting it." Mike reasoned. "Maybe we could find a way to use them. You never know."

The next few weeks were torture on Will. For the first week each of the boys would take turns jumping out and trying to scare Will into the upside down. That usually worked but it also meant that someone had to go with him. Will started to find that he was less and less scared of the upside down if one of the other boys went with him, a feeling not shared by Mike and Lucas. Dustin however did not seem as bothered by the experience.

"You know it is not so bad. In the upside down." Dustin said one day

after he and Will had spent about 5 min walking around the upside down version of the school AV club room.

"I think that place is starting to mess up your mind Dustin." Lucas said. He still had not fully recovered from his initial unexpected visit to the upside down.

"No I am serious. We haven't seen the creature in months. Sure it stinks and you don't want to touch anything but I am starting to see some real possibilities with this."

"Like what?" Will asked. He still didn't want to spend time in the upside down but having someone along made it better.

"Well what do we know about the upside down?" Dustin continued. "It is where the creature lives, or lived if he really is gone. It stinks. It's cold. And the longer you stay there the more you die."

"You are not selling me on the possibilities yet Dustin." Lucas said.

"I'm not done yet. Sure there are a lot of bad things about it but there is one good thing that I can think of. When we go there we disappear from this world and where ever we leave the upside down that is where we reappear in this world." Dustin smiled but the faces of the other boys told him that they didn't grasp the importance of what he was saying.

"Oh come on guys think about it. We can use the upside down to go anywhere we want. There is nothing that can keep us out. We just go into the upside down to get in and then come back out and we are golden."

"So what?" Lucas asked. "What are we going to do then? You want to rob a bank or something?"

"No. Better. Much better. We are going after the chocolate pudding."

The four boys met at lunch in the AV room. The plan was simple. Mike and Lucas would distract the lunch lady while Dustin and Will got past her using the upside down. It was easy to decide who was to do what. Will had to go to the upside down because he was the only one who could, Lucas was still scared of it so he was out, Mike was

the talker, and it was Dustin's idea so he got chosen to go with Will. They had finally figured out that they didn't need to scare Will into the upside down. He figured it was the thought of fear that got him there so he could get into the upside down whenever he wanted, the problem was staying there. He still just snapped back into the regular world at random. So far it had not been a problem but on an operation like this it could prove disastrous.

"Just try and stay scared the whole time Will." Dustin suggested.

"I don't think that is the problem." Will smiled back weakly. "I am always scared when I am in there. It must be something else."

"Don't worry about that now. We have to focus. Now let's review the plan." Mike had build a model of the school on the desk in front of the HAM radio. There were little lego men for the lunch lady and teachers that they were likely to encounter. Each of the boys were represented by a plastic green army man. "Me and Lucas will go to the cafeteria at 12:10, give us five minutes to get into an argument about peas being cold to occupy the staff here." He pointed at a crude rectangle of cardboard that must have been the cafeteria. "Then Will and Dustin will enter the upside down at 12:15, leaving the AV room and making their way to the kitchen entrance of the cafeteria here." Again he pointed at the model, this time moving two plastic green army men to a cut out section of the cardboard cafeteria.

"Hey why do you always make me be the radio man?" Dustin asked. "He is the stupidest of all the little green army men. He has to weapon, he can't do anything, and he is standing in that funny bow legged position that makes him fall over all the time."

"Focus Dustin we don't have much time." Lucas said.

"Easy for you to say, you are always the sniper. Snipers are cool."

Mike took control of the meeting again. "Like I was saying, 12:15 you leave AV room and are at the kitchen door by 12:18, you enter and make your way to the hallway behind the fridge. Now this is where it is tricky. You will have to come back from the upside down in that hallway and pray that no one is there. If Lucas and I are making a big enough scene then you should be clear." Mike then moved the two

army men representing Will and Dustin to a match box standing on its end. "You then move to the fridge and get as much pudding as you can get into your backpacks in thirty-seconds." Mike pointed a finger at Dustin for effect. "Stick to the 30 seconds, we can't risk getting caught with our hands in the cookie jar."

"Why are you pointing at me?" Dustin said.

"Because I can trust Will to stick to the plan. I am not sure you can stick to a time line when you are looking at that tin canned temptation." Mike replied.

"Ouch Mike. You make me sound like the fat kid."

"You are the fat kid." Lucas said. Will giggled and Dustin looked shocked. Then he nodded his head in agreement and Mike continued with the briefing.

"By 12:19 you should be back into the hallway behind the fridge. From there you are back into the upside down and as fast as you can back to the AV room. Lucas and I will meet you there." Mike moved all the green army men back to where they had been at the start of the briefing. "Any questions?" Everyone shook their heads no. "Then let's do this." All four boys put their right hands into the center of the circle, one on top of each other. Eyes met eyes, palms were sweaty, and Will was shaking. No wonder his was the worst part of all. They were committed and it was time.

The plan went almost perfectly. Dustin took 45 seconds instead of 30. Mike and Lucas were a bit too loud with their protestations of the temperature of the lunch room peas, it caught the attention of one teacher too many and they had both been given detention. If that was all that had happened it would have still been an excellent mission. There was one more thing that fouled the plan. When Will and Dustin got back to the AV room, and Will brought them back from the upside down Dustin was elated, and Will was terrified.

"What is wrong Will, that went perfectly? Look at how much Chocolate pudding we got. This can feed us for weeks." Dustin almost yelled.

"I saw someone else in the upside down. Someone was watching us."

"Who? Was it the creature?" Dustin was concerned.

Mike and Lucas got back to the room then, closing the door behind them they tried to catch up with the conversation. "What did you say?" Lucas asked. "You saw someone in the upside down?"

"I think so. It was hard to tell. Everything in the upside down is all rotting and gross but it is still there. This was kind of wispy, like a ghost, but not a ghost." Will sounded confused.

"What do you mean? Was it a ghost?" Lucas asked. One more reason not to go back to the upside down for him.

"I don't think it was a ghost. It was a person and she was trying to talk to me but I couldn't hear anything. She was reaching at me and her lips were moving but I don't know who she was." Will explained.

"What did she look like?" Lucas asked.

"It was hard to tell. It was like she was there, but not there. Kind of a presence that was in between. She was our age, but not a student here or I would have recognized her. She had these intense eyes, and her hair was really short. Like in the military."

"Eleven!" Mike screamed.

2. Chapter 2

There were empty chocolate pudding cans scattered all over the table in Mike's basement. Dustin was seated in front of a rapidly diminishing pile of full cans of pudding and with each can finished he was contributing to the equally rapidly growing pile of empty cans on the table. A few had fallen off the pile and rolled under his chair. He didn't pause to pick them up as he reached for another can. "So let's get this straight Will. You saw a girl in the upside down, but a girl that looks like Eleven, but you have never seen Eleven so you can't be sure, but you are not sure if you saw her because she was like a ghost and was there but was not there? Is that right?"

Will flicked an empty pudding can off of the paper he was drawing on and answered Dustin without looking up. "Yep that is right."

"That doesn't make sense. I mean we last saw Eleven in the school when she and the creature disappeared. How is she in the upside down? Did she take the creature back there?" Dustin held up a can of chocolate pudding and tried to fish out the remaining pudding the corners with his tongue.

"Like I said, I am not sure that she WAS in the upside down. It was like she was in-between. That is the best way I can describe it, in-between." Will put down his pencil and picked up a crayon and started adding color to his picture.

Just then the basement door burst open and Mike and Lucas came rushing in. Slamming the door behind him Mike ran to the table and flung himself into the chair next to Will. "I thought we were never going to get out of detention. It has been killing me this whole time. Will, we have to talk about this. Do you really think that you saw Eleven?"

Lucas threw his back pack on the floor and slumped down into the old couch on the side of the room. "Yes, please Will, tell Mike if you saw Eleven. Anyone tell Mike if you saw Eleven. Just so long as I don't have to talk to him about it anymore. One hour detention and all Mike wants to talk about 'Do you really think that Will saw Eleven?' 'If he saw her does that mean she is alive?' 'So Lucas do YOU

think that Eleven is alive?' Please somebody else talk to Mike about Eleven!"

Dustin laughed and traded looks with Lucas. They both knew why Mike was so excited but the brotherly code prohibited them from saying so out loud until Mike said it first. They knew Mike liked Eleven, but you didn't call a brother out until he said it first.

Mike turned to Will again. "Come on Will, what do you think? Was it Eleven?"

Will didn't answer. He just held up the picture he had been working on.

"That's her! That's her!" Mike screamed. The other boys ran over to take a look.

"Yep that's the psycho all right." Lucas said. Mike smacked Lucas' arm with the back of his hand. Mike wasn't going to admit his feelings right but he also wasn't going to let Lucas get away with calling her a psycho. "Ouch Mike I was only kidding."

"Well, I guess you can't say that you never got to meet Eleven anymore Will because that is definitely her." Dustin said as he tossed a can to the floor, he had given up on trying to keep them on the table anymore.

"Come on Dustin my mom will freak if she sees this mess." Mike said as he watched the can hit the floor. He turned to Will again. "Now what did she look like, did she look sick, does she need our help?"

Will sat back in his chair and put the picture down. Mike was leaning forward so close to him that Will was feeling a little closed in. "I don't know Mike. Like I said before. I didn't really see her. I only saw a faint wispy her. It was really weird. I couldn't hear what she was saying but I could see her lips moving. She wasn't flying or floating but she also wasn't touching the ground. She followed us for a minute and then we fell out of the upside down. I still can't control how long I stay there very well."

"So do you think it was a ghost?" Lucas asked.

"No, it can't be a ghost. That would mean she is dead and I don't think that she is dead." Mike replied.

"You don't think she is dead or you don't want her to be dead Mike? Those are two different things." Dustin said as he opened another can of pudding. He had started to feel over full about two cans ago but felt like he had to keep eating to justify taking more time to grab more cans and almost ruining the plan. "We were there when it happened Mike. She disintegrated that creature right in front of us and as the creature disintegrated so did she."

"No! You are wrong." Mike said just shy of yelling. "I know she is alive!"

"OK. Let's say for the sake of argument that she is alive. Then what? What did Will see?" Lucas asked as he sat back down on the couch. His back was tired from standing at the chalk board writing lines for detention.

"What do you think Will? Do you think it was a ghost?" Mike asked.

Will sat and thought for a minute. "I don't know. I have never seen a ghost, but I don't think it was a ghost. It seemed too real to be a ghost, but too faint to be real. Like I said she seemed to be kind of in-between."

"I got it!" Dustin jumped up. He farted a little with the exertion and everyone laughed. He knew it was the pudding, milk product did that to him but he couldn't stop eating. The other boys knew it was going to be a rough afternoon on the nose today. "Remember how the gateway to the upside down was opened by Eleven when she was scared by the creature. Maybe she was able to take the creature into even another dimension. Not here, not the upside down, like an in-between?"

"If she is in another dimension then how could Will see her?" Lucas asked.

Will seemed to be catching on to Dustin's idea. "Think about it Lucas. When I was in the upside down no one could see me but I could make the lights go on and off for my mom. Maybe Eleven IS in

another dimension, an in-between dimension, and I can see her in there?"

"Then why can't you talk to her like you did with your mother?" Mike asked.

"Maybe each dimension has different rules. With the upside down I could control lights and electricity. Maybe with the in-between I can see but can't hear. I don't know. There is very little science on the subject so far." Will answered.

"But there is a chance that Eleven is alive? We just have to figure out how to get her from the in-between to here." Mike smiled with hope.

"So how are we going to do that? We are just figuring out how to get Will in and out of the upside down. Now we need to figure out how to get to a whole new dimension too?" Dustin had given up on the pudding now and was sitting back feeling his now growing stomach. The pressure was getting worse and he knew he would have to let it off soon but he didn't want to, it was going to be a bad one.

The boys just stared at each other. Eleven had been here before and she knew how to use a radio find Will in the upside down. Will's powers seemed to be different. He wasn't able to move things with his mind or control other peoples actions. He could just move from one dimension to another. If they were going to figure out how to get Eleven out of the in-between then they had to figure out Will's powers really worked, and how to control them.

"Ok Will. We have a mission. We are going to get Eleven out of the in-between just like we go you out of the upside down." Mile was resolute. "In order to do that we are going to need to figure out how to control your powers. It is going to be tough but we don't have a choice. Are you up to it?"

Will was scared. Will was usually scared, but this was more scared than usual. He really hated the upside down. It was not easy to get over an experience like the one he had. "Ok Mike. She helped me when she didn't even know me. I guess it is my turn to help her. I just hope that when we get her out of the in-between she is really as cool as you say she is because I don't want to do this unless she is one of

us."

"Will when we first met Eleven I didn't like her at all. I didn't trust her." Lucas said. "But now if it means that we can get her back even I will go into the upside down to find her."

Will looked at each of the boys in turn, meeting their gaze with courage. "That is good enough for me."

"Then let's get to work." Mike said.

3. Chapter 3

It was a week of scaring Will into the upside down before Will figured out why that worked. While Will was in the upside down he had been afraid every second of every day. The emotion that he most closely associated with the upside down was fear. Thinking back to all the times he had been accidentally to the upside down he realized that every time it had been when he was afraid.

"So when I am afraid, when I feel fear, that seems to be when I slip into the upside down." Will explained to the group. They had hidden in the AV room after school and waited until everyone was gone. "So you can stop scaring me all the time." Will looked at Lucas as he said this. It seemed that Lucas enjoyed scaring Will more than the rest.

"Watch I'll prove it to you." Will closed his eyes and suddenly he was gone. The other boys looked at each other and nodded together. After a few seconds Will was back, right where he had been standing before. "See. Now you can stop scaring me all the time."

"So if you go to the upside down when you are scared what makes you come back?" Mike asked.

"Maybe once you have been in the upside down for a while you stop being scared and then you just pop back here?" Dustin said while he opened the door to the AV room to see if the coast was clear. He looked up and down the hallway and then walked out into the hall looking back over his shoulder and saying. "Let's get going."

Lucas followed Mike who followed Dustin out the door, Will was the last to leave. He shut the door behind him and jogged a few steps to catch up to the others. "I don't think that is it Dustin."

"That is what will?" Dustin asked.

"I don't think that the reason I pop out of the upside down is because I am not afraid of it anymore. I am always afraid of it. The longer I am in the upside down the more I want to leave and come back here."

"There must be some reason you can't stay." Dustin said.

"I don't blame you Will, I hate it there too." Lucas said. "If I never go back for the rest of my life it will still be too many times in the upside down."

Mike strode ahead of Dustin and peaked around the next corner. There was no one in sight. "We are almost there."

"Remind me again why we have to do this in the school. We are really risking getting caught. Why can't we just practice at home like we usually do?" Will asked.

"Because this is where you saw Eleven. You haven't seen her anywhere else and we have been in the upside down a lot. There must be something about this place." Mike answered. They turned a corner and stopped, just outside the kitchen door to the cafeteria. "Ok Will, you are sure this is where you saw her?"

Will looked around and nodded his head. "Yes, Mike, This is it. I remember coming out of that door and looking back at Dustin because he was dropping pudding tins on the floor and for some stupid reason I was afraid he was making too much noise. No one in the real world would be able to hear a bomb go off in the upside down but I was still scared he was going to get us caught." Will walked down the hall a few steps and pointed towards the class room at the end of the hall. "It was out of that door that I saw her come out and look at me. She was saying something but I couldn't hear. Then we just ran back to the AV room. To be honest I wasn't really sure that I had seen anything until I talked to you guys later in Mike's basement."

The other three boys looked at each other knowingly. None of them wanted to speak. Finally Lucas asked Will. "You are sure it was THAT room where you saw Eleven? That one at the end of the hall?"

Will looked both scared and confused. "Yes, I am sure it was that one at the end of the hall. Why are you acting so weird about it?"

"Do you remember when we told you about the night that Eleven defeated the Demogorgon?" Mike started.

"Yes, what about it?"

"It was that room where it happened." Lucas said. The other boys didn't know it but he still carried his wrist rocket in his backpack. He knew it had been Eleven that knocked the Demogorgon away from them but he secretly hoped that the wrist rocket had helped.

"So what do you think? Do you think that maybe this is a gateway, like the one Eleven opened up when she saw the Demogorgon?" Will asked.

"Maybe. It is possible. But we have been in that classroom hundreds of times and it looks normal. Which is surprising given how it looked after Eleven and the Demogorgon fought. Those government guys really fixed up the school fast." Mike said.

Dustin started walking towards the room at the end of the hall. "Well, there is no point in standing around here talking about it, lets just go find out." The other boys followed him down the hall. "Besides, we had better hurry if we are going to get home without anyone getting too suspicious." Dustin reached the door and opened it inward. The room looked the same as it always did. Desks in rows, window blinds closed, and a rather new looking chalkboard at the front.

Mike closed the door behind Will as he was the last one into the room and said. "Ok Will lets get going. Remember the plan?"

"I remember Mike. Just get into he upside down and see if I can see Eleven. Once I see her I try and make contact." Will recited.

"And remember not to stay too long. Just take a look and then come back." Lucas said. He hated the upside down, he even hated it when other people went there.

"Got it." Will said. Then he turned towards the chalk board. Not that it made any difference he was just used to facing a chalk board when he was in a classroom. He closed his eyes and thought of his worst days in the upside down. When he opened his eyes he was there. The room was foul. There was a dark black sludge all over the place, it looked like tree roots and vines that had once being growing all over were now dead and decaying. Standing at the front of the classroom,

pinned to the chalkboard was the Demogorgon.

Will involuntarily sucked in a deep breathe, it was a mistake, the rancid toxic air of the upside down filled his lungs and he started to cough uncontrollably. He shrank back from the Demogorgon, expecting it to chase him, but it didn't follow. It thrashed its head around and clapped its jaws in Will's direction but its arms and legs stayed pinned to the chalkboard. Will stood up straight and looked closer at the Demogorgon. It was only then that he realized that the Demogorgon was there but not there, like a cloud.

"He must be in the in-between too." Will said to himself. He felt a lot better now but found even the ghostly image of the Demogorgon too scary to ignore. Will forced himself to look around the room, he turned slowly away from the Demogorgon until he was facing the back of the room. Once a gain he sucked in an involuntary deep breathe and once again it was a mistake. Sitting cross legged on the table at the back of the room was Eleven. She had the same ghostly look that she did the first time he saw her, but this time she was smiling.

Eleven's lips were moving but Will could not hear a sound. "What? Eleven? Is that you?" Will yelled.

Eleven pointed to her ears and shook her head no. She must not be able to hear either. Will Pulled a pad of paper out of his pocket and wrote 'Are you OK?'

Eleven nodded her head yes.

'Can you get out of here?'

Eleven put her hands up signifying 'I don't know'

'We are going to get you out.'

Eleven shook her head no.

Will was confused. 'why?'

Eleven pointed at the Demagorgon, then pointed at herself and then at the ground.

"Oh I get it." Will said out loud. "If you leave the Demogorgon might get out?"

Eleven just pointed at her ears and shook her head again.

"Oh sorry." Will said. Then he wrote on the pad again. 'you stay Demogorgon stay?'

Eleven nodded her head yes.

Eleven was trapped in the in-between. She hadn't even tried to get out. She stayed to keep the Demogorgon trapped, like an inter-dimensional jail cell and she was the jailer. Will looked at Eleven sitting on the table, head in hand, both bored and attentive. Her hair was growing a little and she didn't look too hungry. She must be getting food from the cafeteria. Will wondered what the food was like in the in-between. It must be better than the upside down because Will had never found anything he was willing to eat in the upside down.

She noticed Will still staring at her and smiled at him. She had really pretty eyes Will thought, and a nice smile. She turned her head and the light from the doorway fell across her cheek. She was really pretty. Will started to think what it would be like to save her from the in-between. He saw himself taking her hand and guiding her back to the real world, she would be so happy. He saw her smile in his mind and say 'thank you Will you saved me' and give him a hug.

Will closed his eyes and savoured the feeling of what it would be like to save Eleven, so pretty and smiling at him with those big blue eyes. When he opened his eyes Eleven was still sitting on the table, legs crossed and smiling. She seemed somehow more there than she had a minute ago.

"Will?" Eleven asked

He had done it, he was in the in-between. He was going to save Eleven. Will then heard the Demogorgon behind him, he spun around and saw the creature thrashing to get free of the chalk board. All of the fear of being chased and hunted all those days in the upside down came back to him in an instant, and in that same instant he was back

in the upside down and then just as suddenly back in the real world.

"Oh Crap!" Will yelled.

"Nice to see you too Will." Dustin said.

Will looked at the three boys standing close to where they had been when he left and said. "Boy, do I have a story to tell you."

4. Chapter 4

It was the day after Will made it into the in-between and confirmed that Eleven was still alive. The boys were hanging out in Will basement again. Lucas was sitting on the old couch against the wall with Dustin. They were passing a bag of chips back and forth swapping a Star Wars comic book in turn. While one ate chips the other read the comic book. "Stop losing my page Dustin." Lucas said as he got the comic back from Dustin. "You read too fast."

"No I read at a normal speed. You read too slow." Dustin answered back. "And stop getting chip grease on the pages. It smudges."

"What's the big deal Dustin. It is not like it's ever going to be worth anything. It's just a comic book." Lucas said.

"That's not the point. I like to read them again and the grease smudges the pages. Just wipe your fingers before you pick it up. Is that so hard?"

"I don't know. Is it too hard for you to keep a finger in my page so you don't lose my spot as you speed read?"

Dustin and Lucas kept fighting as Mike sat with Will at the table. They had been playing Dungeons and Dragons and their binders were stacked in the center. Will was bent over a drawing of Eleven.

"Is that what she looks like right now?" Mike asked as he leaned towards will and bent his neck to get a better look at the page.

"Just about." Will answered.

"Her hair looks longer than last time we saw her." Mike said smiling.

"She has really pretty eyes. It is hard to get the eyes right." Will leaned back and held the picture up and looked at it for a minute. There was a faint smile in the corners of his mouth. Mike didn't notice. He was looking at the picture as well.

"So tell me again. Did she look OK?" Mike asked.

Will was getting tired of answering the same questions over and over. "Yes Mike she looked OK. I was only in the in-between for a second."

"But you think that you can get back? How did you get there in the first place?"

"I am not sure. You know how the upside down works. If I get scared enough or I think about something that scares me I go to the upside down. When I think about wanting to come home I come home. That is pretty clear. The in-between is a bit different. I just found myself there." Will knew that the last part was a little bit of a lie. He was pretty sure he knew what emotion he was feeling that put him in the in-between, but Mike was the last person he could tell.

"Have you tried to get into the in-between again?" Mike asked.

"No. Not yet." Will lied again. The truth was Will had been trying to get back into the in-between all last night and all of today. He had drawn ten different pictures of Eleven and thought about her constantly but he couldn't slip into the in-between. He was sure that was the emotion that he was feeling when he went there the first time but couldn't figure out why it wasn't working now.

"Well let's try." Mike suggested.

Dustin stopped arguing with Lucas about grease smudges and comic books and got up from the couch and walked over to the table. "I don't know if that is a good idea Mike. Remember what Will said. The Demagorgon is in the in-between now. I don't think we should go messing around in the dimension where the Demagorgon lives without a plan."

"But it is fine. Eleven has him trapped, remember. And besides, the school is a long ways away, we could practice here and then go back to the school and get Eleven." Mike was pretty transparent about why he wanted Will to get back into the in-between.

"Then what Mike?" Lucas asked from where he sat on the couch, still reading the comic book. He was holding the comic book with a tissue in each hand so he and Dustin must have come to an agreement. "She already said that she was not going to leave the in-between so long as

the Demagorgon was there. Even if we get back into the school and back into the in-between, then what. She isn't going to come back with us."

Lucas was right, and Mike knew Lucas was right. "I know I know." Mike said. "I just want to do something." Mike slumped back in his chair and picked up one of Will's pictures of Eleven. He looked deep into her crayon eyes, trying to remember what it had been like with her. It hadn't been that long ago but it seemed like an eternity.

Will saw Mike looking at the picture and wanted to snatch it out of his hands. That was his picture, he had drawn it, why should Mike get to look at it? Will had not been there when Mike had been with Eleven, he had never seen the two together. So he didn't think that it was off limits for him to think about Eleven too. It wasn't like he was going to do anything about it. He was just little Will Byers. Girls didn't look at him that way. People said that he was different, some thought that he was gay. Will knew that he wasn't, but that didn't seem to make a difference. He like Eleven, was that such a bad thing? He knew that it was, Mike liked Eleven first. Their group didn't have a code about how to deal with girl troubles, they had never had girl troubles to deal with, but he was pretty sure that if the group had a code about girls number one rule would be no hitting on your friends girl. Will kept drawing another picture and was lost in thought. He didn't notice that Dustin was talking to him until he felt a smack on the arm.

"WILL. Are you listening to me?" Dustin bellowed.

"Oh sorry. I was just thinking..." Will trailed off.

"I asked you a question. How long did you say you were in the in-between?"

"I don't know exactly. I was looking at Eleven sitting on the table, then she was just 'more there'. It felt different than the upside down, nicer, but empty. Then I heard the Demagorgon behind me, I turned and saw it, it scared the crap out of me, and I was back in the upside down, and then just as fast I was back here." Will tilted his head up and to the side and it looked like he was adding in his head. "The whole thing was maybe a few seconds. Why?"

"That's not enough time." Dustin said half to himself.

"Not enough time for what?" Lucas yelled from the couch, he was still holding the comic with the tissue paper and looked to be on the last page.

Dustin got up and started pacing the room. He did this when he was thinking out loud. "We want to get Eleven back right?"

They all answered "Yes."

"And she is not going to come back so long as she has to keep the Demagorgon trapped in the in-between right?"

Again they all answered "Yes."

"Well then the answer is obvious right?" Dustin said with a finality that implied the whole room had come to the same conclusion that he had. The looks on their faces told him that they had not. "Oh come on guys. There is only one way that we can get Eleven back."

"What?" Mike asked "How do we get Eleven back?"

Dustin took a deep breath, looked each boy in the eyes and said. "We have to kill the Demagorgon."

5. Chapter 5

'Owner of a lonely heart' by Yes was playing loud enough that Will could hear it when he came in the front door. "OK guys it looks like Jonathan is home." Mike and Dustin and Lucas followed Will into the front room. It was cleaned up from the Demagorgon fight but you could still see a few scorch marks on the wall. The carpet was a new shag yellow and the walls had been painted a deep brown. Even the hole in the wall had been repaired but you could see where it had been outside because the siding was new in that area. "Jonathan has been listening to a lot less rock and a lot more of this sappy stuff since the Demagorgon. Don't ask him about it though he gets cranky about it if you do."

The other boys nodded in ascent as the group walked down the hall to Jonathan's room. Will knocked three times and then waited. Nothing happened. He knocked again a little louder. This time the music suddenly got quieter and foot steps approached the door. The door opened a crack and Jonathan's face peered through. "Hey Will, guys, what do you want?"

"Umm we were wondering if we could ask you a few questions?" Will asked.

"Sure. What do you want to know?" Jonathan answered.

"Can we come in? I don't want mom to hear us talking about this stuff."

"Oh. One of those kind of talks." Jonathan looked back into his room and then turned back to the door and said, "Just give me a second to put some things away."

As the door shut Dustin turned to Will and whispered "what is that all about. What is he doing in there that he doesn't want us to see?"

Will gave Mike a side long glance as he whispered an answer. "He thinks I don't know but he has a bunch of pictures of Nancy in there that he looks as when he listens to the sappy music." He paused for a second and continued "Sorry Mike."

Mike was unfazed. "Everyone knows he has a crush on her. Quite frankly I would rather Jonathan was dating Nancy than Steven. He's a bit of a jerk."

The door opened wide and Jonathan was standing in the door frame. "Who is a jerk?"

There was a second of panic in Mike's eyes. Dustin came to his rescue. "There is a kid at school named Troy. He is a huge jerk"

"Isn't he the kid who got his arm broken by Eleven?" Jonathan asked.

"Ya. That's the guy" Mike recovered.

"Don't worry about him. I doubt he will bother you anymore. Come on in boys". Jonathan stepped back from the door to let the boys into the room. Lucas was the last in and as he entered Jonathan shut the door behind him. All four of the boys took a seat on Jonathan's bed. There was no more room left on it so Jonathan continued to stand. "What do you guys want to ask me about?"

The boys looked at each other. None of them wanting to be the first to ask. Ever since the Demagorgon it was a touchy subjects to bring up. The silence made everyone uncomfortable. Finally Lucas asked what they were all thinking. "We want to ask you about when you fought the Demagorgon?"

Jonathan didn't look as surprised as they thought he would. "I was wondering when you guys would get around to that. I thought you would have asked me a long time ago."

The boys were surprised. They had thought that Jonathan would be mad about being asked about the Demagorgon. It had been a topic that they were forbidden to talk about in front of their mother.

"I thought you didn't want to talk about it." Will said. "Every time I started asking you about when you were hunting it with Nancy..."

"That is different." Jonathan interrupted.

"How?" Will asked.

"It just is." Jonathan said loudly. "Now what do you want to know about the Demagorgon?"

Will was still a little confused about the difference between asking about killing the Demagorgon and hunting it with Nancy so Lucas picked up the conversation. "What we want to know is how did you try and kill it?"

"Didn't I tell you this story before?" Jonathan asked.

"Kind of but not really. You told us that you tried to trap it in a bear trap and light it on fire but that is about it." Lucas said.

"Well, there is not a lot left to tell. We figured out that it was attracted to blood so we cut our hands and set the trap and waited." Jonathan said.

"I was wondering about that." Dustin interrupted. "Why didn't you cut your arm or leg or something? If you cut your hand then you can't use your hand anymore. Don't you need your hand?"

"Dustin knock it off. We are trying to figure out how to kill the Demagorgon and rescue El. We don't have time for this again." Mike said.

"It is just that you see this in movies all the time and it doesn't make sense. Why would you cut your hand voluntarily at any point? You will bleed just as good from a cut on the back of the arm but then you can still hold a weapon. It just doesn't make sense to cut your own hand in a fight. But every time someone needs to get blood in a movie or on TV there they go, cutting their own hand again."

The boys started arguing about what appeared to be a long standing topic of discussion, every one of them trying to talk over the other, each as sure that they were right as the next. Jonathan had to yell to get their attention. "Knock it off!" The room got instantly quiet. "Now what is this about you killing the Demagorgon and rescuing Eleven. I thought that she died when she killed it? Why are you talking like she is alive and needs rescuing?"

This was the part that Will was hoping to avoid. You could see his

reluctance by how he was standing, hands behind his back and looking at the floor. He looked up at his brother with his eyes, not raising his head and said. "Well, we thought that was true but we found out that Eleven is still alive and so is the Demagorgon."

"How is that possible? No one has seen any evidence of Eleven or the Demagorgon." Jonathan asked.

"Well, that is because Eleven is holding the Demagorgon captive. So he can't get out and hurt anyone. But so long as she is holding him captive she is stuck too." Will explained.

"Where? Where is Eleven holding the Demagorgon? How can you four possibly know this and everyone else has no clue?"

"It is kind of hard to explain."

"Well, you are going to have to try little brother."

"It is probably easier if I show you." Will was hesitant. "I was in the upside down for a while and when I came back I thought that was the end of it, but it wasn't. Something happened to me in there." Will reached out to his big brother and took his hand. "This is going to be unpleasant."

Suddenly the two brothers were in the upside down. The stale smell of death and thick toxic air was all around them. Jonathan was startled and held his free hand out to ward off some unseen danger. Just as suddenly they were back in Jonathan's room, the other boys were still standing there. Lucas looked disgusted, he still hated the upside down and even thinking about someone else going there made his sick. Dustin was smiling, the look on Jonathan's face was priceless.

"What the Hell was that?" Jonathan stammered.

"That was the upside down." Will explained. "That is were I was trapped all that time. When I came back I must have taken a piece of it with me because now I can go back and forth between the two."

"Just like that? Whenever you want you can shift back and forth between this world and the upside down?"

"Now I can. In the beginning it was a lot harder and in the very beginning I would just slip into the upside down without any control at all. That was really scary." Will said.

"So what are you telling me? That you have been exploring in the upside down and you found Eleven there holding the Demagorgon captive?"

"Not exactly." Dustin picked up the story. "We were using the upside down as a way to sneak around school and stuff. It was one time when we were liberating pudding from the cafeteria that Will saw something odd."

Will continued "At first I was not sure what I saw because I had never seen Eleven before but after I drew a picture Mike told me that is who she was." Will didn't look at Mike when he said this. At last count he had actually drawn twenty-one pictures of Eleven, he kept them hidden in his room.

"Wait a minute. Back up. You were stealing pudding and saw Eleven in the upside down but had never seen Eleven before so you had to draw a picture of her and then you found out that was Eleven?" Jonathan tried to clarify.

Will answered. "Not exactly. I didn't see Eleven in the upside down. I saw her in another dimension that you can kind of see from the upside down and it wasn't until I found a way to get into that dimension that we found out that she was alive for real."

"And that the Demagorgon is still alive." Dustin added.

"Ya, that's right. She's holding the Demagorgon captive in the in-between." Lucas added.

"What is the in-between?" Jonathan asked. This was a lot of new information and he was struggling to keep up.

"The in-between is just that. It is a dimension in between the upside down and here. Will saw Eleven there and she had the Demagorgon trapped, pinned up to the chalk board like an insect." Mike answered. He became more excited as he continued. "She is stuck there because

she says that she has to keep the Demagorgon there. If she leaves then he might escape. So she is trapped. We want to find out how to kill the Demagorgon so we can rescue Eleven."

"Exactly. So that is were you come in Jonathan. You fought the Demagorgon. You hurt it. So we want to know how you did it so we can kill it." Lucas said. Of all the boys he was the most keen about killing the Demagorgon.

"Hold your horses. I just fought the thing once, and I don't even know what happened to it." Jonathan explained. "Nancy shot it a lot and it kept coming. Steven hit it with a baseball bat with nails in it and it kept coming. Then we caught its foot in the bear trap and I lit it on fire and finally it fled into the upside down."

The boys sat still, eyes wide, mouths open, in silence. Lucas asked "then what happened?"

"Mom and chief Hopper were in the house in the upside down at the same time, I could see the lights coming on as they moved, just the way that they did with you Will. Chief Hopper told me that they found the blood trail from the Demagorgon leaving the house and followed that back to the Library, where they found Will." Jonathan ran his fingers through his hair and paced around the room. "After they found Will they got back to the gateway and left as fast as they could. No one saw the Demagorgon until he turned up at the school. You all know the rest of that story."

"Then you didn't kill it Jonathan, because when he got to the school he went through those government guys like a bowling ball. If Eleven hadn't stopped him in the class room we would all be dead right now." Lucas said. He looked disappointed. "I really was looking forward to killing that thing."

"Wait a minute." Will said. "You said that the Demagorgon you fought had its foot caught in a bear trap?"

"Ya. I thought that it chopped the foot right off. It was hard to tell because everything was burnt but it looked like a foot was still in there when the Demagorgon disappeared." Jonathan answered.

"And we know that when it got back to the upside down it was still hurt because mom and Chief Hopper were able to follow the blood trail back to me right?"

"That's right. What are you getting at?"

Will looked both happy and scared. "The Demagorgon that I saw in the in-between, the one that Eleven is guarding. Not only had both of his feet. He didn't have a burn mark on him." The rest of the boys didn't seem to understand the importance of what Will was saying so he continued. "That means that the Demagorgon that Eleven is guarding is not the same Demagorgon that Jonathan and Nancy were hunting. There is more than one Demagorgon!"

"If that is true then why have we not seen the other one since the fight at the school?" Mike asked.

"Maybe that means that Jonathan and Nancy really did kill the Demagorgon. Maybe he crawled back to his lair and bleed to death. He must be laying dead in the upside down right now. And the one that attacked us at the school is a new one." Lucas figured it out. "So that means that maybe we can kill the Demagorgon!"

"So then we can get Eleven back. She won't need to guard the Demagorgon anymore." Mike was more excited than he had been since Will came home.

"If you are right then we are going to need her too." Jonathan said. "Because that means there could be a lot more Demagorgons in the upside down, and without Eleven we might not be able to stop them."